Malaysian Tertiary Level ESL Students' Perceptions toward Teacher Feedback, Peer Feedback and Self-assessment in their Writing

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Abstract

In Malaysia, teacher feedback is highly preferred by students, who often believe that teachers know best. Teacher feedback shows them their teacher's idea of an ideal writing. However, excessive dependence on teachers adds to their workload. Therefore, teachers are increasingly promoting two other alternative methods that are gradually gaining importance. These methods are peer feedback and self-assessment. This study investigates ESL students' perceptions toward teacher feedback, peer feedback and self-assessment in students' writing process. Questionnaires, adapted from the instruments in the literature, were administered to 107 randomly selected students in a private local university in Malaysia. Students found feedback given to the content and organization of their writing more useful than feedback provided for their vocabulary and grammar. It was also found that students perceived feedback from teacher, peers and self-assessment all as highly useful. Additionally the results indicated while there was no significant difference (p > .05) between the students' perceptions toward teacher feedback and self-assessment, they were both perceived as significantly more useful (p < .001) than peer feedback. The students also perceived explicit feedback as significantly more useful (p < .001) than implicit feedback. The results of this study have implications for English language learning-teaching practitioners and researchers. They shed light on the options preferred by students in revising their writing in ESL writing classrooms. Future research on the effects of teacher feedback, peer feedback and self-assessment on students' writing performance will provide better insight on the preferred methods in ESL writing classrooms in similar settings.

Keywords: English as a Second Language, Writing; Teacher Feedback; Peer Feedback; Self-Assessment; Students' Perceptions

1. Introduction

Teaching writing is given due importance as the other language skills in the Malaysian ESL undergraduate classrooms. Acknowledging the importance of teaching writing, teachers actively implement different strategies that promote performance in writing (Razali & Jupri, 2014). Among the widely used strategies in the ESL writing classrooms is teacher feedback. There are three types of teachers' feedback in ESL writing, namely form-focused feedback, content based feedback and integrated feedback (Park, 2006). Peer feedback and self-assessment are two strategies that are now gaining importance in both literature as well as practice. These alternative strategies are now actively implemented by teachers in their classrooms to assist their ESL writing teaching and learning processes. Consequently, students are now becoming familiar with these alternative strategies which assist them to learn ESL writing more effectively.

1.1 Problem Statement

Teacher feedback is viewed essential in the Malaysian ESL classroom especially at the tertiary level. This is due to the notion that teachers know best and students would want to produce an outcome that closely resembles the teacher's idea of an ideal piece of writing. The classrooms at the undergraduate level are often so sizeable that providing feedback can be a daunting task for the teachers. Other than that, students are expected to master many aspects of writing in a short period of time. Students receive one and a half hours of instruction weekly and an hour of practice during the 14 weeks

of a semester. According to Husin and Ariffin (2008), peer feedback is frequently used in the Malaysian classrooms. However, it is not preferred as much as teachers' feedback. This is because Malaysian students have hesitance in completely trusting the feedback given by peers rather than teachers. They feel that it is the job of the teacher to provide feedback and at the same time students feel that they do not possess the linguistic competence to give feedback to their peers' works (Husin & Ariffin, 2008). This research will offer a perspective on other types of feedback that may offer great help to both teachers and students in assessing writing. Besides teacher and peer feedback, self-assessment has started gaining importance, too. Self-assessment gives the opportunity to students to assess their own work with some assistance in the form of rubrics, questionnaires or checklists. Considering the importance of knowing how students' writing will be graded, this research gives an insight into how self-assessment can assist in helping students to have a better understanding and view of a good piece of writing from the perspective of the teacher. Research in the area of feedback has been extensive but still inconclusive. Seeing how exhausting marking essays would be and the possibility of overlooking some mistakes, this research offers an in depth discussion on teacher feedback, peer feedback and self-assessment and perhaps offer an alternative to teachers in implementing it to ease their work.

1.2 Teacher Feedback

There have been many studies that investigated students' perception and preference on teacher feedback in different contexts. This is an area that has been constantly of scholars' interest and there have been conflicting findings on the usefulness as well as effectiveness of teachers' feedback in ESL writing instructions. There are several scholars who argued that feedback is not helpful in the writing classrooms; for example, Radecki, Swales (1988) and Truscott (1996) asserted that grammar correction should be abandoned as it has no place in writing courses. One of the areas to which particular attention has been paid is the effect of grammar feedback on learners' ESL writing performance. Although there have been conflicting results on the importance of grammar feedback in the ESL writing classroom, many writing teachers from different contexts still tend to give feedback for different aspects of writing, such as grammar, content, organization, and vocabulary in their classrooms. As teachers believe in feedback and continuing it in the instruction, so do students expect to receive feedback for their written work and also believe that feedback benefits them in their writing (Hyland, 1998). In form-focused feedback the grammatical errors are highlighted. This type of feedback is regarded as harmful as it consumes so much of time and energy that it diverts and minimizes the more productive aspect of a writing program (Truscott, 1996). However, Leki (1991) studied university students' reaction towards teacher feedback and found that since having writing free of error was students' major consent, they preferred error correction by the teachers. Studies conducted by Saito (1994) and Zhang (1995) showed that students valued teachers' feedback the most in comparison to other alternatives like oral feedback and peer feedback. In a study conducted by Yang, Badger and Yu (2006), a huge percentage of students adopted teacher feedback with reasons that teachers are more 'professional', 'experienced' and 'trustworthy'. While students prefer teacher feedback, teacher-influenced revisions happen at surface level. Student writers always have preference towards teachers' written feedback because they believe that it is necessary for them to improve in their writing (Ferris & Roberts, 2011; Ferris, 2004). In another study where students were taught step by step in mastering writing subskills, it was found that direct teacher feedback strategy helped to improve their performance in writing (Elshirbini & Elashri, 2013). It was also asserted that with different types of feedback provided, students' writing will improve tremendously. Regardless of the method of feedback provided to students, Gulley (2012) found that students improved their writing. Teachers are viewed as a role model who guides them throughout the writing process. Feedback from them are depended heavily upon and this puts them under a great deal of pressure, other than having to juggle other work.

1.3 Peer Feedback

Research done on peer feedback has slowly gained popularity. Implementation of peer feedback in writing classrooms is not a new phenomenon. However, students need more guidance in giving feedback to their peers as some feel uncomfortable judging their peer's work and some are lack of knowledge on how to go about it (Cheng & Warren, 2005). Teachers should make it clear to students that giving peer feedback is a way to get students to be more actively involved in the learning process, rather than substituting a teacher's task. Several researches conducted have shed positive light on peer feedback in the writing process. A study conducted by Peng (2010) showed that students had no experience prior to the study; nevertheless, they held positive attitudes and perception towards the peer feedback exercises. Also, a study by Williams (1992) revealed that most of the students perceived peer assessment as useful and interesting. In another study which explored students' perceptions of integrating wiki technology and peer feedback (Lin & Yang, 2011), it was found that students could easily understand why they committed grammatical mistakes after being pointed out by their peers. Also, one student felt that employing peer feedback in assessing writing goes beyond the traditional paper and pencil way of learning and there is a sense of achievement. Salih (2013) found that student writers emphasize grammar as the main aspect that peer reviewers should focus on; instead, peer reviewers focused on clarity of feedback. This shows that student writers should go beyond grammar focus and focus on other aspects that work together in the creation of a piece of good writing. It shows that teachers are slowly integrating peer feedback as a form of exercise for students in assessing writing. Some studies, on the other hand, pose different perspectives on peer feedback in writing. Insufficient confidence in assessing their peers' papers was also found in a study conducted by Cheng and Warren (2005). Following that, some students were not satisfied with the quality and quality of feedback provided by their peers (Xiao & Lucking, 2008). It is essential to implement peer feedback strategy in the classroom for it to be successful despite the potential challenges that come with it (Paulus, 1999). One of the possible reasons behind these inconsistent results could be the learners' cultural differences. As reported by Mukundan and Nimehchisalem (2011), peer review did not prove significantly effective on their students' narratives which could be because students

from a similar cultural background are more inclined towards establishing harmony among one another than to criticize each other's work. As such, in order to efficiently implement peer feedback in classroom, teachers should discuss the method thoroughly with the students. On part of the students, they should be informed that peer feedback is an effective method to review each other's work as they may have reservations when consulting their teachers.

1.4 Self-assessment

Growing interest in self-assessment as a non-traditional form of assessment has taken place in ESL classrooms (Moritz, 1996). Dragemark-Oscarson (2009) asserted that propagating the capability of self-assessment is crucial as an educational objective as students ought to have the ability to assess their results and to relate them to their learning condition. Independent and lifelong learning has been the main objective advocated in many institutions of higher education as it is viewed to be able to enhance academic achievement as well as the quality of the graduates. As a result of this, the focus has changed from teacher centered education to student centered education. This is no different in the context of L2 teaching and learning. Based on the constructivist learning theory, learners are viewed as having great potential to develop. The position of this theory is totally opposite to that of the behaviorist theory which treats learners as passive participants with the need to be stimulated by the environment. The paradigm shift from the behaviorist theory to constructivist theory has affected instructional practices in the L2 classrooms. Self-assessment is viewed to be a promising strategy in creating independent learners who constantly assess themselves to progress in their learning. Other than that, the shift from summative to formative assessment in education has also placed a strong emphasis on the implementation of self-assessment in ESL writing classrooms. Self-assessment in the writing classroom enhances students' writing performance by encouraging reflection and meta-cognition in the writing process (Nielsen, 2014). In a study conducted by Singh and Terry (2008), it was found that self-assessment encouraged students to review their assignment critically and to improve them. Both teachers and students have positive perception towards self-assessment and view it as a skill that is transferable and is one that underlies a lifelong learning skill in other areas (Dragemark-Oscarson, 2009). It is also found that self-assessment skills help students to improve their writing skills as well as their subsequent writing practices (Belachew, Getinet, & Gashaye, 2015). In a study conducted by Honsa (2013), it was found that self-assessment promotes learner autonomy and the students realized that they could develop self-regulated collaborated learning skills. Also, as a result of self-assessment, students developed five learning strategies that would help them in revising their writing. As the purpose of self-assessment is to promote learner autonomy in revising their writing, students become independent writers and are capable of improving their writing on their own to a certain degree. In another study, with remarkable implications for educational practice, it was found that improving self-assessment and task-selection skills can significantly increase the amount of knowledge that students gain from self-regulated learning where learners can choose their learning tasks (Kostons, Gog, & Paas, 2011). Teaching self-regulated learning skills gives learners a sense of control and encourages them to focus on their methods of learning. This is confirmed by Mahmoodi, Kalantari and Ghaslani's (2014) who reported cognitive and metacognitive strategies were preferred by Iranian EFL learners. Therefore, combining self-assessment and the traditional method like teacher feedback in the ESL writing classrooms will not only help to lessen the burden of teachers but help students become independent learners who develop the capacity to take charge of their learning at every stage. On the other hand, there are also negative views from students pertaining the practice of self-assessment in ESL writing classrooms. Even though students may learn markedly by assessing their own written works, some may become frustrated in the process. In such cases, the role of the teacher is very crucial in guiding the students. Assessment is usually regarded as the task of teachers. In the Malaysian context, there have been unfavorable results as teachers are not exposed to self-assessment method in classroom. They may not be aware of the potential of using self-assessment method as their teaching tend to be very teacher-centered (Majid, 2007). Some students may think that it is unfair to ask them to share the burden of having to do teachers' work (Ross, Rolheiser, & Hogaboam-Gray, 1998). Despite the shortcomings, it may greatly benefit both teachers and students as they will know what should be in an essay and what constitutes a good piece of writing.

1.5 Research Question

Understanding the perception of students towards these various strategies especially at the tertiary level is important since it can help their effective implementation. Therefore, this study investigated students' perception towards the usefulness of teacher feedback, peer feedback and self-assessment. The following research questions were posed to address this objective:

1. What is the students' perception towards teacher feedback provided to different features (grammar, vocabulary, content and organization) of their written work?

2. What are the students' perceptions on the combinations of the different types of feedback (teacher feedback, peer feedback and self-assessment)?

3. Is there a significant difference between the students' perception on teacher feedback, peer feedback and self-assessment?

4. Is there a significant difference between the students' perceptions towards explicit and implicit teacher feedback?

2. Method

The study had a cross-sectional design. Survey method was followed to collect the data. A questionnaire was developed, validated and administered to the students who responded to its items based on their perceptions. The data elicited from the respondents were analyzed quantitatively.

2.1 Participants

The respondents of this study comprised 107 undergraduate students in a private Malaysian university, namely Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman. UTAR is a private university which was established in 2002. The university offers 166 programs in various fields like Accountancy, Actuarial Science, Agriculture, Arts, Business and Economics, Creative Industries and Design, Engineering and Built Environment, Information and Communication Technology, Life and Physical Sciences, Mathematics and Process Management, Medicine and Health Sciences, and Social Science and Education. The university has two campuses in Bandar Sungai Long and Kampar. This study was conducted in the Bandar Sungai Long Campus.   Almost 95 percent of the students who participated in this study were Chinese, learning English as a second language. The remaining 5 percent were Malay and Indian. Ages of the participants ranged from 20 to 23 years old. They were all bachelor degree students at the Faculty of Accounting and Management. The participants had completed one to more than three English papers within one to three academic years prior to the current semester. Therefore, they have ample exposure to teachers' feedback, self-assessment and peer assessment strategies. The main objective of the English courses offered is to improve students writing skills for specific purposes like business writing, argumentative and report writing. The courses do emphasize on other skills like listening and speaking, but attention is majorly given to writing. The participants had been exposed to teacher feedback, peer feedback and self-assessment which are studied in the current research.

2.2 Instrument

This study was conducted by using the survey research method. A new instrument (Appendix C) was adapted in reference to Jacobs, Curtis, Braine, and Huang (1998), Zhang (1995) and Yang, Badger, and Yu (2006). These instruments elicit general information on perceptions towards teacher feedback and peer feedback. The instrument of this study is a more detailed questionnaire with items that elicit detailed information on the perception of students on the usefulness of teacher feedback, peer feedback and self-assessment in the writing classroom. Jacob, Curtis, Briane, and Huang's (1998) instrument is a one-item questionnaire that consists of two options for the participants to choose from. On the other hand, Zhang's (1995) instrument has two simple questions eliciting information on preference between teacher feedback, non-teacher feedback, peer feedback, and self-directed feedback. Yang, Badger, and Yu's (2006) instrument itself is adapted from Jacobs, Curtis, Braine, and Huang (1998) and Zhang (1995). However, more items are added and the items have multiple choices. All the above mentioned instruments focus on teacher feedback and peer feedback only whereas the current research instrument has items covering the perception of students on self-assessment strategy in writing classroom.

Our instrument consisted of 30 five-point Likert scale items including never, rarely, sometimes, often and always, as well as three multiple choice items, and three open ended items (Appendix). The questionnaire had a section on the respondents' demographic information followed by a second section eliciting perception of students towards the usefulness of teacher feedback, peer feedback, and self-assessment. A total of 10 five-point Likert scale items covered the perception of students on teacher feedback focusing on different features of writing, namely content, organization, vocabulary, and grammar. The questionnaire also covered information on explicit and implicit teacher error feedback. Jacobs, Curtis, Braine, and Huang (1998) and Zhang's (1995) instruments did not cover the feedback provided on the features of writing whereas Yang, Badger, and Yu (2006) covered these questions in the interview prompts but not the questionnaire. There were also 6 other items eliciting information on peer feedback. The items covered the preference of peer feedback generally and the different types of peer feedback experienced by students. Additionally, 7 more items were added to this instrument to obtain information on the preference of students towards self-assessment. A close review of the literature in the area of self-assessment confirms ample number of strategies in implementing self-assessment effectively in the ESL writing classroom. In the current instrument, only the strategies that are practiced in the current research context were included. This was to ensure that the items included in the questionnaire were relevant to the sample of the study. Among the strategies were using a self-assessment checklist, training learners on self-assessment, and reviewing a written model (Andrade & Valtcheva, 2009). All these strategies were implemented in this research context throughout the study in the institution. Finally, the questionnaire ended with 7 more items that would elicit information on the perception of students towards receiving one type of feedback only or different combinations of feedback.

In order to ensure the construct and content validity of the new instrument, it was sent to a panel of experts after a few rounds of drafting and revising by the research team. The experts suggested rewording some of the items to improve the clarity and readability. Some additional items were added related to features of writing as recommended by the experts. For example, initially, items on features of writing were only limited to grammar, content and organization. Two other items, including "It helps when my teacher only highlights my vocabulary errors" and "It helps when my teacher corrects my vocabulary errors," were added as it was suggested that vocabulary is an important feature of writing that is covered in the current context.

All three experts' comments were considered and changes were made per their suggestions. Finally, all experts agreed that items were well designed and the questionnaire measured relevant and important points pertaining teacher explicit and implicit feedback, peer feedback strategies, self-assessment strategies and perception on different combinations of feedback strategies. After the validation process, the instrument was administered to 10 students and no further modifications were made as the students confirmed that the items were clear and readable. The internal reliability of this questionnaire was 0.816.*2.3 Data Analysis Methods*

IBM SPSS (Version 21) was used to analyze the data. To answer the first two research questions, descriptive statistical method including frequency and percentage were used. In order to answer the third and fourth research questions, both descriptive and inferential methods, including repeated measures ANOVA and paired samples t-test were used, respectively.

3. Results

The normality of distribution of the data was verified before they were analyzed using inferential statistical methods. This section presents and discusses the results based on the research questions.

3.1 Perceptions toward Teacher Feedback

The first research question investigated the students' perceptions toward teacher feedback provided to different features (grammar, vocabulary, content and organization) of their written works. The values of the related items were first added and then transformed into three categories of low (never & rarely), moderate (sometimes), and high (usually & always) in order to find out how the students perceived the feedback given to different features of their writing by their teachers. Overall, majority of the students perceived teacher feedback directed at all four writing features as highly important (Table 1).

Table 1. Perceptions towards teacher feedback and different features of writing (n = 107)

Writing Features	Perception					
	Low		Moderate		High	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Vocabulary	18	16.5	25	23.4	64	59.8
Grammar	19	17.8	27	25.2	61	57
Content	3	2.8	16	15	88	82.2
Organization	10	9.3	17	15.9	80	74.8

As illustrated in Table 1, the percentage of the studentswho perceived feedback provided for the content (82.2%) and organization (74.8%) of their written work as highly useful, was considerably higher than those who rated lexical (59.8%) and grammatical (57%) feedback as highly useful. This indicates that most students preferred meaning directed to form directed feedback. The same pattern can be observed by considering the percentage of the students who believed that teacher feedback provided for different dimensions of their writing was not really helpful. Very few students thought that feedback directed at the content (2.8%) or organization (9.3%) of their writing was not useful whereas the percentage was interestingly several times higher for students who did not find grammatical (19%) and vocabulary feedback (18%) useful.

This is in line with Ferris (1995) who provided research evidence that students prefer to receive comments not only pertaining to the grammar of their writing but to its content as well. This also confirms the evidence provided in other researches in which students would always wish to get feedback on features other than grammar like content and organization (Hedgcock & Letkowitz, 1994). This supports the current pedagogical trend where meaning-focused instruction should be given due importance in order for students to gain grammatical competence naturally. Krashen (1981, 1994) asserts that the two necessary conditions needed for successful second language acquisition which are comprehensible input and low affective filter can only be achieved by meaning-focused instruction. Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to give equivalent importance to the content and organization of writing in providing feedback. Teachers in the current research context tend to emphasize more on grammatical accuracy of writing than meaning. With equivalent focus on all elements of writing which is in line with the findings of this study, better student writers will be produced by avoiding any mismatch between student preference and classroom instruction. Many researchers acknowledge that meaning-focused instruction should be complemented with form-focused instruction for second language acquisition (Lightbown, 1992; Long, 1991).

3.2 Perceptions on the Combinations of the Different Types of Feedback

The second research question investigated the students' perception on the combinations of the different types of feedback (teacher feedback, peer feedback and self-assessment). The values of the related items were first added and then transformed into three categories of low (never & rarely), moderate (sometimes), and high (usually & always) in order to find out the students' perceptions on the combinations of the different types of feedback. Overall, majority of the students perceived teacher feedback, peer feedback and self-assessment as highly important (Table 2).

Table 2. Perceptions towards combinations of the different types of feedback (n = 107)

Feedback Categories	Perception					
	Low		Moderate		High	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Teacher and Peer Feedback	1	.9	27	25.2	79	73.8
Teacher Feedback and Self-assessment	5	4.7	25	23.4	77	72
Peer Feedback and Self-assessment	9	8.4	33	30.8	65	60.7
Teacher Feedback, Peer Feedback and Self-assessment	4	3.7	21	19.6	82	76.6

As illustrated in Table 2, the percentage of the students, who perceived teacher feedback, peer feedback and self-assessment (76.6%) as well as teacher and peer feedback (73.8%) as highly useful, was considerably higher than that of those who regarded teacher feedback and self-assessment (72%) and peer feedback and self-assessment (60.7%) as very useful. This indicates that most students preferred a combination of all three strategies. The same pattern could be observed by considering the percentage of the students who perceived combinations of the different types of feedback were not really helpful. Very few students thought that teacher and peer feedback (0.9%) or teacher feedback, peer feedback and self-assessment (3.7%) was not useful whereas the percentage was several times higher for students who did not find teacher feedback and self-assessment alone (4.7%) or peer feedback and self-assessment alone (8.4%) useful.

This finding is similar to a study conducted by Leki (1991) in which university students' reactions towards teacher feedback were studied. Leki found that having writing free of error was the major objective of the students, who preferred error correction by the teachers. Our results are also consistent with a study by Williams (1992) who revealed that most of the students perceived peer assessment as helpful and engaging. Combining teacher feedback, peer feedback, and self-assessment is definitely an area that needs further exploration to implement different stages of feedback on the progress of an individual writer (Singh & Terry, 2008). A study conducted by Matsuno (2009) by utilizing the Multifaceted Rasch Measurement revealed that peer assessment is a possible option to compensate the bias or short-comings that happen in teacher assessment. Therefore, it is suggested that the combination of teacher assessment and peer assessment is encouraged in the writing classroom which is partially in line with the preference of students in this study. Other than that, the implementation of self-assessment and peer assessment is also in line with the core principle of constructivism; students are expected to be fully engaged in their own learning with the support of their peers and their teachers' facilitation (Vygotsky, 1980).

3.3 Difference between Students' Perceptions toward Teacher Feedback, Peer Feedback and Self-Assessment

The repeated measures ANOVA output (Table 3) showed that the differences among the students' perceptions towards teacher feedback (M = 3.66, SD = 0.53), peer feedback (M = 3.03, SD = 0.60), and self-assessment (M = 3.78, SD = 0.75) were statistically significant, $F(1.58, 167.45) = 42.81$, $p = .000$, indicating large estimates of effect size ($\eta2 = .288$).

Table 3. Tests of Within-Subjects Effects for Students' Perceptions toward Teacher Feedback, Peer Feedback and Self-Assessment (n = 107)

Source		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
factor1	Sphericity Assumed	35.033	2	17.517	42.806	.000	.288
	Greenhouse-Geisser	35.033	1.580	22.176	42.806	.000	.288
	Huynh-Feldt	35.033	1.600	21.901	42.806	.000	.288
	Lower-bound	35.033	1.000	35.033	42.806	.000	.288
Error(factor1)	Sphericity Assumed	86.752	212	.409			
	Greenhouse-Geisser	86.752	167.455	.518			
	Huynh-Feldt	86.752	169.561	.512			
	Lower-bound	86.752	106.000	.818			

Based on the results of pairwise comparisons (Table 4), there were no significant differences between students' perceptions towards teacher feedback and self-assessment, t(106) = 1.52, p > .05, 95% CI[-.03, .28].

Table 4. Pairwise Comparisons for Students' Perceptions toward Teacher Feedback, Peer Feedback and Self-Assessment (n = 107)

(I) factor1	(J) factor1	Mean Difference (I-J)	T	Sig.[a]	95% Confidence Interval for Difference[a]	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Teacher feedback	Peer feedback	.631	9.03	.000	.492	.769
	Self-assessment	-.123	1.52	.131	-.284	.038
Peer feedback	Teacher feedback	-.631	9.03	.000	-.769	-.492
	Self-assessment	-.754	7.04	.000	-.967	-.542
Self-assessment	Teacher feedback	.123	1.52	.131	-.038	.284
	Peer feedback	.754	7.04	.000	.542	.967

a. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Least Significant Difference (equivalent to no adjustments).

However, there was a statistically significant difference between their perceptions towards self-assessment and peer feedback, t(106) = 7.04, p < .001, 95% CI[-.97, -.54], as well as teacher feedback and peer feedback, t(106) = 9.03, p < .001, 95% CI[.49, .77].

This confirms some research evidence in the literature that shows students value peer feedback in their classroom but they still prefer teacher feedback over peer feedback (Jacobs et al., 1998). It is also consistent with the findings of a study by Nelsen and Carson (1998), according to which students preferred teacher feedback to peer feedback.

Table 5. Difference between Students' Perceptions toward Explicit and Implicit Teacher Feedback

Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	p
			Lower	Upper			
-1.56075	2.49595	.24129	-2.03913	-1.08236	-6.468	106	.000

The results of a paired samples t-test indicated that the difference between the students' perceptions towards explicit (M = 15.42, SD = 2.26) and implicit teacher feedback (M = 13.86, SD = 2.85) was statistically significant, t(106) = 6.47, p = .000, 95% CI[2.04, 1.08]. This provided evidence for the fact that students preferred explicit to implicit teacher feedback.

This finding is consistent with the study done by Lee (2008) that has provided research evidence that students prefer explicit error feedback irrespective of their proficiency level. This supports Hedgcock and Letkowitz (1996) and Leki's (1991) findings claiming that ESL students appreciate form-focused feedback as they learn the correct forms when the teachers highlight and correct the grammatical errors; that is, when they provide explicit teacher feedback. According to behaviorists (Skinner, 1969), errors should be explicitly and immediately corrected; otherwise, they will turn into bad habits and hinder students learning the language system. Adult second language learners' mechanism is different from children's acquisition of their L1 which solely depends on positive evidence (Felix, 1985; Schachter, 1988) that helps them focus on the targeted feature of the language incidentally. Therefore, adult learners need negative evidence, preemptively or reactively for acquisition of certain linguistic features. Based on this ground, it can be argued that form-focused explicit teacher feedback is essential for adult learners to attain higher performance in the ESL writing classroom.

4. Conclusion

The results indicate that the student writers perceived teacher feedback, self-assessment as well as peer feedback as highly useful. Interestingly, the students had positive perception toward self-assessment, which is a relatively new method introduced in the writing classrooms. Peer feedback, although highly valued, turned out to be the least preferred in this context despite the current pedagogical trend that focuses more on students' active participation in improving their peers' writing than being dependent on teachers' feedback. The students also perceived feedback provided for

content and organization of their writing more useful compared with feedback related to vocabulary and grammar which are commonly overemphasized in the current writing classroom context. Based on the findings of the present study, it seems logical to conclude that teachers should primarily focus on the content and organization of their students' writing while providing feedback in the future. Additionally, it was found that the students preferred explicit teacher feedback to implicit teacher feedback.

The results of this study have implications for English language learning-teaching practitioners and researchers. They shed light on the options preferred by students in revising their writing in ESL writing classrooms. With this, teachers will be able to implement the strategies preferred by students in the classroom and avoid any mismatch between the preference of students and classroom instruction. Such mismatches lead to students' dissatisfaction, decrease students' motivation and eventually affect their learning negatively (Brown, 2009; Schulz, 2001). Fulfilling the students' need with their preferred method will directly enhance the teaching and learning environment of the classroom that can eventually promote learners' performance. This positive classroom environment will motivate both the teacher and the students to perform better.

The findings also have implications for researchers in the area of ESL writing. In recent years the role of teacher and peer feedback is rather over-emphasized. The results of this study clearly indicate ESL learners highly value the ability to assess their own performance and progress in ESL writing. Research has shown promising effects of self-assessment on language learning. International educational programs, such as the European Language Portfolio (ELP), have provided evidence on the positive effect of self-assessment on learner autonomy (Little, 2012). Learner autonomy is a key variable in determining learners' achievement. Learners that are more likely to take charge of their own learning are better at setting their learning objectives, selecting the learning methods and strategies, monitoring their own learning progress, and evaluating what they have learned (Holec, 1981). Little (2012) states that "the ability to manage one's own learning is not necessarily inborn: it is the teacher's job to support the transition from nonautonomous to autonomous learning by helping learners to develop their capacity for self-management" (pp. 12-13). Kohonen (2012) mentions self-assessment, among other empowering and useful pedagogical tools, such as learning plans, logs and diaries, language portfolios, teacher conferencing as well as peer support, can create autonomy in learners. Clearly self-assessment provides a broad avenue of research particularly within the educational context of Malaysia where teachers are often expected to be accountable for their learners learning. Future research should focus on obtaining qualitative data from the students through interviews and classroom observations about their perception and teachers' perception on the different strategies used in teaching and learning ESL writing. The effects of teacher feedback, peer feedback and self-assessment on students writing performance should also be studied as it will provide better insight on the methods that should be given preference in the Malaysian ESL writing classrooms.

Acknowledgement

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE OF STUDENTS' PERCEPTION TOWARD THE USEFULNESS OF TEACHER FEEDBACK, PEER FEEDBACK, AND SELF-ASSESSMENT

COVER LETTER

Dear Respondent,

Subject: Request for Participation in a Research Project

You are cordially requested to participate in a study on ESL Students' Perception towards Teacher Feedback, Peer Feedback and Self-Assessment in the Writing Process.
The questionnaire consists of 7 pages and it may take 15 to 25 minutes to answer. Any data collected from you will be treated in strict confidence. The information you provide will be used only for research purpose. All personal identification will be kept strictly confidential and no one will be censured for negative reviews.
If you agree, kindly complete the following consent form.
I highly appreciate your support.

Yours sincerely,

[The names of the researchers]
[Affiliation of the research team]

APPENDIX B

<div align="center">

CONSENT FORM

</div>

I hereby consent to participate in your research project entitled "ESL Students' Perception towards Teacher Feedback, Peer Feedback and Self-Assessment in the Writing Process" and allow you to use the data for the purpose of research.

Name   _____

Phone no   _____

E-mail   _____

Signature:_____   Date:_____

APPENDIX C

SECTION 1: PERSONAL INFORMATION
Instructions: The purpose of this questionnaire is to improve the teaching of writing. The aim is not to evaluate the lecturers. Please do not sign your name. All responses are anonymous.

1) Program: _____

2) Number of English language subjects taken thus far:
   a)   1
   b)   2
   c)   3
   d)   More than 3

3) Your English language proficiency level:
   a)   Elementary
   b)   Lower intermediate
   c)   Intermediate
   d)   Upper intermediate
   e)   Advanced

4) Your English writing score: ……… (0-100)

5) Your English language learning experience:
    a) Taking English language courses in private language schools
    b) Virtual learning
     c) Learning through self-studying
     d) Studying/living in a foreign country

SECTION 2: PERCEPTION TOWARD THE USEFULNESS OF TEACHER FEEDBACK, PEER FEEDBACK, AND SELF-ASSESSMENT

Instructions: Please mark your perception on the usefulness of teacher feedback, peer feedback, and self-assessment by using one of the options (never, rarely, sometimes, often, always) provided.

Item	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1. I find teachers' written feedback useful.					
2. It helps when my teacher only highlights my vocabulary errors.					
3. It helps when my teacher corrects my vocabulary errors.					
4. It helps when my teacher only highlights my grammar errors.					
5. It helps when my teacher corrects my grammar errors.					
6. I find it useful when my teacher gives me written comments on the quality of the content of my writing.					
7. It helps when my teacher corrects the content of my written work.					
8. Teacher written feedback on my organizational errors is helpful.					
9. It helps when my teacher corrects the organization of ideas in my written work.					
10. I find it useful to receive peer feedback.					
11. I find peer feedback useful when the teacher trains us on how to give feedback.					
12. I find it useful when peers comment on my writing by referring to a checklist, rubric, or questionnaire that focuses on the quality of my writing.					
13. I find my peers' general comments useful even when they do NOT use rubrics to give feedback.					
14. I find it useful to discuss my written work with my peer.					
15. I find self-assessment useful in improving my writing.					
16. I find it useful when my teacher trains me on how to assess my own written work.					
17. I find analyzing written samples useful.					
18. Self-assessment checklists (guidelines that help me assess the quality of my own writing) help me in revising my written work.					
19. I find a self-assessment checklist that focuses on different stages of writing (pre-writing, writing, and post-writing) useful.					
20. I feel self-assessment should be used as an exercise to point out the strength and the weakness of my own writing.					
21. I feel the grade assigned by the peer should be used as the final grade in the assessment of the course.					
22. I feel the grade assigned by the teacher should be used the final grade in the assessment of the course.					
23. I feel the grade assigned through self-assessment should be used as the final grade of the course.					
24. Teacher feedback is more useful than peer feedback and self-assessment.					
25. Peer feedback is more useful than teacher feedback and self-assessment.					
26. Self-assessment is more useful than teacher feedback and peer feedback.					
27. I find a combination of teacher and peer feedback useful.					

Item	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
28. I find a combination of teacher feedback and self-assessment useful.					
29. I find a combination of peer feedback and self-assessment useful.					
30. I find it useful when teacher feedback, peer feedback and self-assessment are all practiced in my writing class.					

If you have any more ideas about teacher feedback, peer feedback and self-assessment in ESL writing; kindly mention them in the space below:

………

………

……………………………………………………………………………………

Thank you very much for your invaluable support.